

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 49

By McKee

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Billy Benton Stewart for meritorious service.

WHEREAS, our nation was conceived by individuals who were willing to sacrifice their personal safety and concerns to ensure the safety of their fellow citizens, and the Volunteer State is especially proud to be the home of so many valiant men and women who have performed above and beyond the call of duty; and

WHEREAS, Billy Benton Stewart is one such courageous Tennessean who risked life and limb to rescue a group of strangers from the raging current of a flood-swollen stream; and

WHEREAS, on the morning of January 22, 1954, en route to a work assignment, Mr. Stewart witnessed an approaching car about 300 yards ahead of him swerve from the road as it was about to cross a bridge; and

WHEREAS, as the car plunged into the rain-swollen waters of the Chestua Creek, Billy Stewart quickly parked his company truck and hurried to the bridge as the doomed car was swept fifty feet downstream, disappearing from sight; and

WHEREAS, as he approached the bank of the creek, he spied the occupants of the car-- a man, a woman, their three-month-old baby, and two other men--clinging to a tree; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Stewart hastily retrieved a rope from his truck and threw it across the creek to one of the men in the tree. His initial plan to pull the seriously injured woman to shore

first was soon disregarded as impossible because the rope spanned a channel of very swift water that was fifteen feet deep; and

WHEREAS, Billy Stewart quickly crossed the bridge and, having one of the men secure his end of the rope to the tree, valiantly plunged into the seven-foot-deep icy water to grasp the loose end. Using two more ropes, Mr. Stewart established a lifeline by tying his end to a fence post near the road; and

WHEREAS, with no thought to his personal safety, Mr. Stewart, using the rope for support, swam through the treacherous current to the stranded victims and, with the aid of one of the men, brought the injured mother ashore while the two remaining men carefully carried the baby to safety; and

WHEREAS, a man of quick and decisive action, incredible valor, and unwavering bravery, Billy Stewart risked his own life on that wintry January morning in 1954, rescuing five individuals from drowning in the icy waters of Chestua Creek; and

WHEREAS, on December 7, 1954, Mr. Billy Stewart was awarded the Theodore N. Vail Medal for Noteworthy Public Service in recognition of his outstanding courage, initiative, and resourcefulness in the face of tragedy; and

WHEREAS, it is both a privilege and an honor for this General Assembly to express our thanks and gratitude to Mr. Billy Stewart for his bravery and selfless actions; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we hereby honor and commend Mr. Billy Benton Stewart from Etowah for his courage and resolve in the face of imminent danger and offer our thanks for a difficult job well done.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.